The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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Consider the Lilies.

Flowers preach to us if we will hear ;
The rose saith in the dewy morn,
I am most fair ;
Yet all my loveliness is born
Upon a thorn.
The poppy saith amid the corn,
Let but my scarlet head appear,
And I am held in scorn ;
Yet juice and subtle virtue lies
Within my cup of curious dyes.
The lilies say, behold how we
Preach without words of purity.
The violets whisper from the shade,
Which their own leaves have made,
Men scent our fragrance on the air,
Yet take no heed
Of humble lessons we would read.
But not alone the fairest flowers :
The merest grass,
Along the roadside where we pass,
Lichen and moss and sturdy weed,
Tell of his love who sends the dew,
The rain and sunshine too,
To nourish one small seed.

CHRISTINA ROSETTI.

A Day in June.

And what is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days ;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays ;
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten ;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, groping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers.
The flush of life may well be seen
Thrilling back over hills and valleys ;
The cowslip starts in meadows green,
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,
And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean
To be some happy creature's palace.

J. R. LOWELL.

The Rock of our Strength.

BY THE REV. V. D. DAVIS, B.A.

PSALM lxii., 7.—"With God is my salvation and my glory : the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God."

Those are the words of a truly religious man. They are his confession that he needs a strength greater than his own in which to rest. They express his sense of dependence and his confidence that in God he has such a refuge. Because he can so trust, he throws himself heartily into life. Even if trouble comes, he will stand secure in the strength of the eternal.

The image of a rock, towering high and immovable above the plain, crowned perhaps by a citadel, as a refuge and defence for the people, is often used in the Psalms, where the poet is speaking of security in God. It is an image that would be very striking to a people who spent their time in the open country, tending their flocks, or cultivating the soil, but liable at any time to the incursions of hostile tribes. The great rock towering above them, constantly in sight, would be an emblem of safety. And when, as in the case of Jerusalem, side by side with the citadel stood the sacred temple, and all the reverence and affection of the people gathered about the place, there would be yet deeper meaning in such an expression of their thought.

For us this special meaning is no longer there, and yet the image speaks to us. We have a new feeling of delight in nature. We can understand the language of its beauty and sublimity. To us also a great rock may well be an emblem of the most enduring strength.

Such a rock we often see upon a broken coast, where there are lofty cliffs, standing out boldly into the sea. The great storm waves

come rolling up with thunder, and are dashed into foam and spray upon it. But in storm or calm alike it remains immovable, immense and noble in form, while perhaps on its higher ridges, in protected crevices, are found hardy little flowers, fearless and safe, even in the tumult of the storm, because they have the shelter of the rock, and rest in its great strength and faithfulness.

So, too, with a mountain about which clouds and storms are often gathered, which yet is never moved, and to the people living in the plains below appears as a guardian and benignant friend. They come to love its familiar features. It often protects them from the storm. It speaks to them of the great heights of life, and invites them to new vigour and fresh delight in the keener, purer air of its upper slopes. When from the gathered clouds and darkness of the storm it emerges again, calmly standing out against the clear sky, it becomes a beautiful image of eternal strength. It may well touch the heart of man with deep and reverent emotion. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains. From whence cometh my help?—My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

It is of the very essence of religion to feel that there is a life greater and more enduring than that of our few years on earth, which appear but a moment in the long course of the ages,—that there are strength and wisdom other and infinitely greater than our own, which are manifested in the order of the world and our human life,—in which we may rest and on which we depend for all we have,—that God is indeed a refuge for us, that his truth and unchanging love are a sure foundation, the rock of our strength, our salvation, and our glory!

No part of our life remains unaffected by such trust in the living God. His law rules in our bodily frame no less than in the realm of spirit. The whole material world is consecrated to those who remember this, and feel the touch of his spirit, even in the commonest things.

Otherwise it is a barren outlook: a universe of order, a realm of law, but no law-giver; things beautiful and what seems an exhaustless fountain of joy, but no one to be thankful to; things terrible and sorrowful, but no one in whom to trust, no refuge, no comforter, no word of hope or peace from the unseen. If we say it is nature, and do not mean by that *God*, it is after all a dead thing, with no response of sympathy, a strange blending of what appears to us good and evil, but no clue to the mystery. But if we say *God*, and mean it, and learn to trust in him, while there are still many things we cannot understand, and burdens terrible and grievous to be borne, there is one who knows and understands, who gives us help in our need. We have a clue to lead us through the dark and unknown paths. The beacon light of his infinite love guides and cheers us on our way.

Then the natural animal life is no longer to us in the old contemptuous sense merely of the earth, earthy; and the greater hopes and aspirations of the human heart are not, as they otherwise appear, a vain struggling and reaching out after the unattainable, overshadowed by the mockery of a blind inexorable fate; they are the natural effort of our humanity towards its perfect growth, a true prophecy of the divine future that is to be. The actual present may be poor, but its possibilities are great. There may be even terrible discords in the world as it now is, but to the heart of faith they are all resolved in the harmony of a divine compassion and long-suffering, a wisdom and love, which not only give light in our darkness, but quicken in our hearts the love and faithfulness to work for the perfecting of God's kingdom on earth.

Then when we search out the laws of the body and of those things which minister to its life, and try to enforce them in the community and obey them ourselves, there is a new meaning and new satisfaction in the effort. We are not merely making the best of a doubtful lot, with no confidence in the issue, dreading on every hand enemies that wait to trip us in a fatal fall. We are at home in a friendly universe. We are learning to understand the conditions of a true and happy life in which we fulfil the good purpose of the giver. Cheerfully and thankfully we accept the dominion of his law, which is the expression of his good-will to us. If there are penalties for disobedience, that is but the sterner side of the same unchanging goodness, it is like a hedge of thorns set along the way by which we enter into fuller joy.

It becomes, therefore, a reverent service of God to search out the laws of life, to show the

wonder and beauty of them, to waken reverence through deeper knowledge, to show how there is a way of obedience in our ordinary daily life.

Take, for a homely instance, the law of cleanliness, broken by slovenly and slothful habits, and often by people crowded in great cities, against their will, through the ignorance, or carelessness, or greed of those who have control of the streets and houses. Through destructive fevers and the slower, but not less fatal, working of insidious disease we have been made to feel the penalties of disobedience; and on the other hand, we know how much of the freshness, and gladness, and grace of life depend on giving heed to this law. The cleanliness, which is next to godliness, brings many virtues in its train. The home, which before was slovenly and neglected, but begins to be ordered with neatness and diligent care, offers a new welcome to those who come in tired after daily work. It has a silent, but sure, influence for good upon the children growing up there. It is a sign of care for the well-being of souls as well as bodies. It brings with it new cheerfulness and unselfishness, and new thankfulness for the blessings of home. And with that new care for outward cleanliness will naturally come a new perception of the beauty of pure thoughts and language. With good order comes also a fresh love of truth and clear rectitude of action. Life that begins honestly and of earnest purpose to be beautifully adorned is felt to be something worthier, and helps to make stronger, more faithful, and more capable men and women.

All this comes most surely, and is most deeply felt where there is the thought of God as the Giver of life, the ever-present ruler of the world and friend of man. Those who understand the saying that they are themselves a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in them, must have a reverent care that the courts of that inner temple are kept pure and calm, undisturbed by the noises of the world. There must not be anything base or unworthy in the life which is from God, and is consecrated to his service in the world.

Men sometimes judge of the things of the flesh in an utterly coarse and irreverent manner, as though there could be no question there of the presence and the law of God. That is a practical infidelity or atheism, made often an excuse for baseness of conduct, or springing out of it; whereas, in fact, there is no safe guidance through the affairs of the world, and no true judgment as to the meaning of our earthly life, but that which is obedient to the dictates of righteousness and the noblest humanity, as in the sight of God.

An ordinary selfishness enlightened by experience leads a community to be careful of the laws of health and to do what it can for the prosperity and contentment of the people. But a far surer impulse of wisdom and enthusiasm comes from the thought of the divine kingdom in our midst, to the proportions and tone of which we have to raise as far as possible the actual life of our state or city. It is an end for which to work, especially for those who have a voice in government and direction of the community, or any large body of workers, and those who have the great trust in their hands of the education of the young. On them largely rests the responsibility, to bring up and to form citizens who are strong in mind and body, in conscience and spirit, with clear, ready faculties, with joy in life, and hearty interest in the work of their day. Such is clearly the purpose of God in the structure and latent capacity of our race, and it is largely due to neglect and disobedience to his law in outward things that there is now such grievous failure in that respect.

Not only the terrible ravages of vice work against God's kingdom on earth, but much of the hurry and stress of our modern life. We have yet to learn ways of greater quietness and patience, to be content, perhaps, with fewer of the things which the world reckons as wealth, that we may be richer in the actual treasures of life, with strength, and wisdom, and leisure to realise the fulness of our joy.

We have not only to fight against many forms of vice, but to find better ways of ordering the world's work, that it may be done without wrong to any, and without that terrible strain of overwork, which is so fatal to health and peace of mind and any satisfaction in honourable labour. As it is, there is no question that men grow weaker and more puny under the conditions in which many are compelled to live and work, conditions unfit for honourable citizens in God's kingdom. We sin against individuals and

against the race when we tolerate any oppression or over-taxing of strength that could be prevented or cease from the search for some better way.

The true ideal is of life strong, healthy and joyous, fearless and reverent. If we keep it in mind, and feel that this is God's purpose for our race, it will often help us to a right judgment, and come with encouragement to flagging energies and desponding thoughts. This we strive after, and let the light of hope renew our strength. And as we come to our true refuge in the living God, we see how the material side of life is lifted up to its true place of honour. We find that it is *worthy*, but at the same time understand how much more there is in life than the external, material side. Faithfulness, and truth, and love, ruling and directing the outward things, are known as far transcending them, and the life of man, who is a living soul, the child of God, is understood as here beginning, but not bounded by the limit of our earthly years.

As we learn rightly to reverence this mortal body, and use it as the instrument God has given for our life here on earth, we can cheerfully lay it down when the time comes that it is no longer of any use to us.

"For if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Life here on earth is good and beautiful, when it is in harmony with God's will and purpose; but it is more than all earthly things. We have to take it reverently and thankfully, but not be afraid, when our time is come, to pass into the great silence out of mortal sight. For there are other mansions in our Father's house, and he will be always there. He gives us all that is needful, to keep us secure in his strength and faithfulness, and eternal love.

Our life has many a summer sky
On which no cloud appears,
And hope shines bright in many an eye
That ne'er was wet with tears.

But when we would its sum disclose
And its attainments single,
We find its grandest deeds are those
Where clouds and sunshine mingle.

The Aesthetic Ideal of Life and Conduct.

[Spoken at the Old Meeting Church, Birmingham, on Sunday Evening, May 12th.]

It would almost seem that we can never have a good and noble thing without having its caricature. There is an old proverb to the effect that if there were no gold guineas there would be no brass ones. Every true coin has its counterfeit; every virtue has its spurious image in circulation; every bit of wisdom is mimicked by some bit of folly; and the passion for beauty, which is so deep in the human heart, which brings men so near to God, which is a perpetual fount of refinement and inspiration, which is able to touch the thoughts and feelings that lie too deep for human words, can also, by a strange perversity, be used to minister to the basest appetites, and to make vice more dangerous by making it more attractive. As deadly poison can be distilled from the fairest flower, so can the angel of art be made to sully and poison the soul of the devotee. The word "æstheticism," as used by the great masters of language, means the pursuit of and devotion to the beautiful. But in modern days it has suffered degradation—first, by the affectations of a number of idle, frivolous, notoriety-hunting people, who love to pose as the specially cultured and artistic of mankind, and who, in order to attract attention, cultivate a certain sickly effeminacy of dress, thought, attitude, and speech which has gained for them the nickname of the "æsthetes." Secondly, the word has been degraded by its use as representing certain low ideals of art and life—namely, that art is to be pursued for art's sake alone irrespective of all ethical questions; that beauty has no connection with morality, that everything may be allowed—every immorality may be depicted in novels and on the stage, if only it is done artistically; that no social restraints and no ethical limitations must be set to the æsthetic life; that genius may do what it likes; and that in the pursuit of æsthetic sensations no silly scruples of old-fashioned modesty need stand in the way. And so the true æsthetic movement has been dragged through the mud. Great names are associated with the revival of the æsthetic spirit in our midst—names as great as

Keats, Ruskin, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and William Morris. But the work begun by those noble souls has been foully prostituted in the art, literature, and drama of well-known names in this decadent age. The new fiction, the new drama, the new criticism, and even the new woman—who is mostly the woman with a past—are all the creatures of a certain æsthetic ideal of life. The gilded pollution and artistic effeminacy, in which all regard for men's honour and women's purity is sacrificed to the gratification of æsthetic sensations, is too painful and disgusting a chapter of modern society for anything more than a passing allusion. Yet it serves to point a moral, and show the tendency of a merely æsthetic view of life, and it may yet be a blessing if it causes a righteous wrath among all decent people against a Paganism which is as abhorrent to simple manliness as it is to Christian saintliness. It is something to see the depths to which the doctrine that all things are lawful in art inevitably leads. "Conduct is three-fourths of life," said one of the wisest of Englishmen, himself a lover of beauty and one of its chiefest prophets. An art that only exists by flouting conduct deserves only a short shrift. Right feeling and right action will, we are sure, after a wholesome purge, regain their sway amongst us. Mr. Walter Pater was a very different man from the "Æsthetes," and to mention him in the same breath is to do him an injustice. Mr. Pater was one who lived laborious days, and found his pleasures in the occupation of a student's life; but, although he made some notable contributions to literature, his ideal of life is really at the root of all the mischief. Mr. Pater tells us that since life is so short our true wisdom is to fill every moment of it with as many and as varied exquisite sensations as possible. That is the æsthetic ideal stated in its most attractive terms, and I maintain that it is thoroughly base. The number, variety, and quality of our sensations is quite a secondary matter. It is the quality of mind, heart, and conduct which is of primary and essential importance. To live in order to find and multiply exquisite sensations is to live on a low level. Be the sensations pleasurable or painful, duty is the chief matter—that every man be found faithful in his work, loyal to his word, kind to his fellows, true to his conscience, unselfish, self-controlled, brave, manly, with the animal part of him in subjection to the spiritual—this is the essence of life. We have to confront the hunger and thirst after exquisite sensations with the hunger and thirst after righteousness. We have to confront a life of varied and exquisite sensations with a life of strenuous duty, of earnest labour, of reverence for the true, the just, the lovely, the childlike, the pure. What has come of the doctrine that there is no connection between art and ethics? A flood of pestilential literature which has day by day waxed more audacious in its demands that every old decency shall be abrogated, every old-fashioned modesty bowed out of court in order that the writers may enjoy the absolute license which it is necessary for them to possess if they would make a new sensation. They have persuaded themselves that there is nothing in all the world so worthy the patient labour of the art-student as purely animal passion. They have given us "problem" plays, where, in a crowded theatre, one is bidden to spend three hours in carefully studying how to break the Seventh Commandment. We have male and female novelists who vie with each other in producing books that a hundred years ago would have been burned by the common hangman—books whose merit is the fidelity with which they pourtray the fevers and brutalities of a kind of love which is only another name for sensuous desire, and whose chief characteristic is the persistency with which they preach that wrong is right, and common decency a played-out prejudice of the past, and all in the sacred name of art! We are bidden free ourselves from the old narrow conventions against which the artistic soul rebels. But the old conventions, narrow though they be, were not so narrow as to stifle the great men and women who form the glory of English art. Conventions under which Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Tennyson, the Brownings, and a thousand others lived and flourished, may still, it would seem, have something to say for themselves.

When it is contended by the "Æsthetes" that art in itself is neither moral nor immoral, but only un-moral, I am not disposed to quarrel with them. It is perfectly true that art is primarily concerned with beauty and not with ethics. Didactic pictures, pictures that are tracts in dis-

guise, are a mistake. Pictures that are painted, or novels and plays that are written first of all to be sermons and not for the sake of beauty, are not and cannot be great works of arts. They may serve a good purpose and have a temporary popularity, but they are not noble art. Do I say then that art is not intended to make people better? Nothing of the sort. But how does art make people better? Not by teaching a definite code of morality, or even by enforcing particular duties, but by refining the imagination, by quickening noble emotions, by bringing the soul into those high moods of praise, tenderness, admiration, delight, out of which noble action and beautiful conduct naturally and easily flow. Art does not directly inculcate morality, but indirectly it ministers to its powers and susceptibilities mightily, and walks hand in with religion. Like religion, it for ever bears witness that man liveth not by bread alone, but by thoughts, faith aspirations, romantic feelings, and immeasurable love. Like religion, it ever seeks the ideal. Like religion, it is the foe of all mere conventionalism. You have done quite as much for a man when you have refined his imagination as when you have taught him the Catechism; and the man whose eyes have been opened by the artist and the poet to see the beautiful in nature is nearer to God far more than a man like Peter Bell, who

> Roved among the vales and streams,
> In the green wood and hollow dell;
> They were his dwelling night and day,—
> But nature ne'er could find the way
> Into the heart of Peter Bell.
>
> In vain through every changeful year
> Did nature lead him as before;
> A primrose by a river's brim,
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more!

If he had been taught to see and love the delicate beauty of the primrose, "that hardness in his face and eyes," which the poet describes, would have been softened. It is the mission of the artists to make us alive to the visions of loveliness in earth, air, and sky, and human story. They teach us to see the unseen; they reveal the things of nature and of men that are unspeakable and full of glory. They open our dull eyes to the world of beauty in which God has placed us, and say, "Look there; love and worship; reverence and rejoice."

For what is art? Let me quote one of Ruskin's definitions. "Art is the quest of beauty in the spirit of delight." Its mission is to give delight. But the world of beauty is like the *Beryl* in Rosetti's ballad—

> "None sees here but the pure alone."

To see the beauty which gives delight there is needed a certain delicacy, refinement, simplicity, and love of love, so that except ye become as little children ye cannot enter the kingdom of art!

Three things are to be remembered.

(I). There never was a noble art which was not the expression of a noble moral life. I do not say for one moment that a noble moral life can be produced by art. Morality has its roots in something deeper than art. What art does for morality is not to produce it, but to refine it, glorify it, and carry it on to perfection. On the other hand I do not say that a noble art can be produced by morality. As ethics have not their roots in art, neither has art its roots in ethics. Yet they perfect and complete each other. The ethics ennoble the art, the art intensifies the feeling for ethics. Noble art has its source in noble people. You may point me to artists and poets whose lives were tainted with great immoralities and every evil. "Did not these men produce noble art?" They did, but in virtue of what? In virtue of the nobility that was within them in spite of the evil. If they gave the world anything whatever of sterling worth, it came out of the sterling worth in their souls. Men sometimes think that because the artistic temperament is peculiarly liable to some sins and weaknesses these things are inevitable to a great period of creative art, forgetting that the striking work of such men would have been infinitely better if there had been no stains on their soul—forgetting also that whatever is true and abiding in their art is the result of the better part within them. And if you are tempted to think, as young people sometimes are, that you may permit yourselves in the weaknesses which are sometimes allied to genius, or that genius makes excusable certain transgressions of the moral law, I would have you remember that the saddest lives on God's earth, and the most miserable, have been the lives of men and women of this tainted nobility of nature.

(II). I would further have you remember that noble art deals with noble subjects. No lie is more detestable than the lie that all things are lawful in art. There is a class of subjects dealt with in some novels, plays, and pictures, that are no more fit for the expression of art than the filth in the sewers is fit for the dining table. Life, it is true, has its gutters and scavengers, but to transfer these to the stage or the canvas, in the name of art, is to commit a gross and obscene offence on human nature. The physician has to face abnormal and disgusting facts of human life, but if he brought them out of the pathological museum into the drawing room, we should kick him downstairs. And the artist who thrusts his studies of human depravity and human bestiality under our eyes has descended to the level of the scavenger. Let us keep steadily before ourselves the definition:—"Art is the pursuit of beauty in the spirit of delight." What beauty and what delight is there in Zola's novels?—to take only one instance. That which makes an artist is love of beauty and power of shaping it. But the power of shaping alone is not art. The most skilful representation of the ugly, that is of that which awakens disgust, or base passion, or scorn instead of reverence, is not art at all. I agree with Ruskin that Tenier's pictures of drunken boors, or those other Dutch pictures of butchers' shops, and the dissected carcases of pigs and sheep, however cleverly painted, are debased art. They are not the quest of beauty in the spirit of delight. It is not the same to art whether a painter spends his skill on a choir of angels, "a praising God," or on the skirts and poses of a ballet-girl. However accurate and skilful the representation of the one, it is altogether on a lower level from the other. The one picture uplifts, and the other degrades; and the more skilful the workmanship, the more it degrades. Fine technique is not fine art. Art must love and shape the beautiful.

(III). My last words on this subject are to women. The ignoble æstheticism of the present day lives on woman's degradation. We hear much from this decadent school of art of the emancipation of women; many of the novels and plays that have attained popularity have had for their motive the freeing of women from the old-fashioned notions of the sanctity of home ties, of marriage vows, of personal chastity—ideas and sanctities which have hitherto nourished all that is sweetest, and loveliest, and strongest in English life and character. They have sought to identify the woman's movement with free love free union, and the absence of any respect for cleanliness and the Ten Commandments. A more dastardly and devilish attack on womanhood was never made. He is not the friend but the enemy of the woman's cause who attempts to link together the beauty and freedom of art with the wrecking of the marriage-bond or the sullying of personal purity. The æsthetic ideals of the school I have been describing mean the immeasurable degradation of woman, as they have already involved the immeasurable degradation of art. It is an ideal which would plunge woman down again into the mire, and make her the mere tool of a man's passing lust. Reverence for woman has been one of the great saving forces of civilisation, as it has been a constant inspiration of art. The finest work of Spenser, Dante, Shakespeare, and Walter Scott has given itself to the task of picturing a noble, pure, lovely, and vital womanhood. We cannot mistake the testimony of these great artists. In Una, Imogen, Rosalind, Jeanie Deans, and in all the world's greatest poems and pictures, woman rises to her highest, and exercises her queenly power just in so far as home, family duties, the marriage bond, self-sacrificing love have shone out in unsullied beauty. We must confront the ideal of woman given us by the "æsthetes" with the fair, strong, gracious ideal of woman given us in the Bible, in Shakespeare, in Walter Scott; and we must confront their ideal of art with another ideal which, with an equally passionate love of beauty, bows its head before the beauty of holiness.

Mr. John Page Hopps tells the following story in his interesting account of Dr. Martineau published in the *Daily Chronicle* on April 22nd. "Before Stopford Brooke left the Established Church, but while pondering his duty in that matter, Dean Stanley begged him not to go. 'We need you, and men like you,' he said, 'to help us broaden the Church of England till it can hold all sincere Christians.' To this Stopford Brooke replied, 'Do you think that in your time or in mine it will be broad enough to make Martineau Archbishop of Canterbury?' 'I am afraid not,' replied Stanley, 'Then' said Brooke, 'it will not be broad enough for me.'"

"Max Havelaar."*

A POEM, TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF E. D. DEKKER (MULTATULI).

"My child, the hour of nine is striking, hark!
The night-wind murmurs, and the air grows cool,
Too cool for you I fear; your forehead burns!
You have all day so wildly played about,
You sure are weary, come, your *tikar*[1] waits you."

"Stay, mother, leave me yet one moment more!
It is so sweet to rest out here . . . and there,
Indoors upon my mat, I sleep at once,
And know not even what I'm dreaming! Here
I can at least straight tell you what I'm dreaming,
And ask you what the meaning of my dream . . . hark!
What was that?"
"'Twas but a *klapper*[2] fell."
"And does that hurt the klapper?"
"I think not,
'Tis said that fruit and stone possess no feeling."
"But a flower, can't it feel either?"
"No,
'Tis said it feels not."
"How then came it, mother,
That yestern, as I brake the flow'ret off,
You said to me 'it hurts the flow'ret so?'"
"My child, the pukul ampat[3] was so fair,
You tore so rudely its frail leaves in twain,
That I was truly grieved for the poor flower.
Although the flower itself might feel it not,
I felt it for the flower, for it was fair."

"But, mother, you are fair too!"
"No, my child,
I think not."
"But yet, mother, *you* have feeling?"
"Yes, all men have it . . . but not all alike."
"And can aught do *you* harm? Say, does it hurt you
When heavily my head rests in your bosom?"
"No, *that* hurts me not!"
"And, mother, I . . .
Can *I* feel?"
"Without doubt! Remember you
How you did stumble once upon a stone,
And wound thereby your tiny hand, and weep?
And you did weep when Sudin told to you
How yonder on the mountains fell a sheep
Far down into a deep abyss, and died.
Long time you then did weep. . . . That then was feeling."

"But, mother, is then feeling pain?"
"Yes, oft!
Yet not always, at times 'tis not! You know
When little sister plucks you by the hair,
And, crowing, presses her wee face to yours,
You laugh then gladly . . . that is feeling, too?"

My little sister, too . . . she weeps so often,
Weeps she for pain? Has she, then, feeling, too?"
"That may be, child, but still we know it not,
For she, so small she is, can yet not say it."

"But, mother . . . listen, what was that?"
"A stag
That late has stain in the thicket, and with haste
Now turns him homeward, that he may find rest
With other stags that he loves dearly."
"Mother,
Has such a stag a sister like I have,
And has he mother too?"
"I know not, child."
"It would be very sad if 'twere not so!
But, mother, see . . . what glimmers in the bush?
See how it hops and springs . . . is that a spark?"
"No, 'tis a fire-fly child."
"Say, may I catch it?"
"You may, but then the tiny fly's so frail
You'll do it hurt, I doubt not, for no sooner
You touch it with your fingers all too rudely,
The creature faints and dies, and shines no more."
"That were a pity! I'll not catch it then!
See, it has vanished . . . no, see here it comes . . .
I will not catch it, though! See, off it flies,
Rejoicing greatly that I have not caught it.
There flies it . . . high! Up yonder . . . what is *that*?
Are those, too, fire-flies yonder?"
"No, those are
The stars."
"See one, and two, and ten, and thousands!
How many may they be?"
"I know not, child;
None hath yet told the number of the stars."
"Say, mother, knows *He* neither the stars number?"
"No, my sweet child, *He* too not."
"Is it far
Up yonder where the stars are?"
"Very far!"
"But can it be these stars have feeling too?
And would they, if I touched them with my hand,
Fall sick straightway, and, like the tiny fire-fly,
Lose all their splendour? See 'tis stirring yet!
Say, can it be 'twould hurt the stars too?"
"No,
It does the stars no hurt! For 'tis too far
For your small hand: you cannot reach so high."

"Can *He* then reach the stars there with his hand?"
"*He* neither; that can no one!"
"What a pity!
I'd give you one so gladly! When I'm big,
Then will *I love you so until I can.*"

The child then fell asleep and dreamed of feeling,
Of stars which he had caught within his hand . . . .
Long yet the mother slept not! Yet she dreamed,
She too, and thought of one far distant. . . . .

Translated by H. HAROLD JOHNSON.

* A translation of this work from the Dutch, by Baron Alphonse Nahüys, was published at Edinburgh, 1868, by Edmonston and Douglas. The poem itself is written in German.

[1] Tikar = a mat. [2] Klapper = a cocoa-nut.
[3] Four o'clock—name of a flower that opens about that time.

Historic Notes on Midland Churches.

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS OF WARWICKSHIRE AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTIES.

PART II.

A truly fraternal spirit on the part of the brethren to one another is early manifested in the minutes of their transactions. At the Walsall meeting, on 28th September, 1789, the Rev. Benjamin Carpenter preached from Romans xii., 2, and the secretary writes, "Revs. Scholefield, Carpenter, Amner, Griffiths, Scott, Lewis of London, and myself, met together at Bro. Beesley's to take leave of him before he set off for Uxbridge." Again, on 17th April, 1793, we read that the meeting was held at Brown Heath, near Bromsgrove, "at the Rev. Mr. Wills's, preacher Rev. B. Carpenter (from Exodus xxxv., 15). Rev. Robt. Gentleman concluded with a prayer suited to the situation of Mr. Wells's family, who were soon to embark for America." On 12th August, 1813, at Dudley, the Rev. Benjamin Carpenter preached from St. John v., 35, and the "discourse was a tribute of respect to the memory of Rev. Hugh Worthington, of London."

From time to time the secretary alludes in a few touching words to the death of his brethren, and in 1814 we get this tribute, "The Rev. William Procter died at Market Drayton, April 3rd, 1814. The distinguishing traits in his character were an artless simplicity and kindness of deportment, and cheerful piety. He was, near 30 years, secretary to the Monthly Association of Ministers, during his residence at Oldbury." Mr. Carpenter died on 23rd November, 1816, and the secretary records how he "was highly and deservedly esteemed and much lamented."

At Tamworth, on 7th August, 1827, the Rev. James Hews Bransby preached from St. John ix., 18, "an appropriate testimony to the memory of Rev. John Small, 14 years minister of Coseley."

Concerning ordinations, the minutes have reference to five services:—

(*a*) 1787.—"Rev. Mr. Beesley was ordained latter end of June."

(*b*) 1790, 11th May, at Cradley.—"Rev. James Scott solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry by prayer and imposition of hands. Rev. Griffiths prayed, Carpenter delivered discourse upon Ordination, asked the questions, and took the confession of faith; Cole prayed the ordination prayer, Scholefield delivered the charge from Titus ii., 1, Gentleman preached from Romans xvi., 3, and Amner concluded with a general prayer."

(*c*) 1796, 11th Oct.—"Rev. Samuel Parker, of Coseley, was ordained as a Christian minister, W. Procter introduced the service with prayer and reading the scriptures, Rev. Samuel Griffiths asked some questions and prayed a general and ordination prayer, Rev. Radcliffe Scholefield delivered a charge on 2 Timothy ii., 15; Rev. Mr. Jenkins preached, Hebrews xiii., 7; Rev. W. Wood concluded with prayer."

(*d*) 1802, 9th June, at Walsall.—"Rev. Mr. T. Bowen (of Walsall) and Rev. William Tullideph Procter (of Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, and Findern, Derbyshire) were solemnly set apart to the office of the Christian ministry. Rev. W. Procter, of Oldbury, introduced with reading the Scriptures and prayer; Rev. James Scott, of Cradley, prayed the general prayer; Rev. W. Allard, of Coseley, asked some questions, and prayed the ordination prayer; Rev. W. D. Wood, Dudley, delivered charge on Romans ii. 13; Rev. Joel Maurice, of West Bromwich, preached on Ephes. iv. 17-19; and Rev. Mr. Kell, of Birmingham, concluded with prayer."

(*e*) 1823, 15th July, at Stourbridge.—"Ordination of Rev. Alexander Paterson, M.A. See account by Rev. J. Kentish in *Monthly Repository*, vol. 18, p. 424."

The secretaries of the monthly meeting have been:—William Procter, Alexander Paterson, William Bowen, Samuel Bache, John Gordon, David Maginnis, Charles Clarke, Samuel Fletcher Williams, Henry McKean, Arthur Ellis O'Connor, and Evan David Priestley Evans.

In concluding these few notes, the writer would venture to ask if the time has not now come for the carrying out of one of the "unaccomplished intentions" referred to in the historical sketch of the centenary, in 1882—viz., the preparation of a history of the rise and growth of Nonconformity in the Midland Counties, with monographs of the several congregations included in

the meeting? Many years ago the Meeting by resolution determined to commit the preparation of the general history to the Rev. John Gordon, who undertook the task, and also agreed to edit the monographs contributed by the members of their respective churches. Death overtook Mr. Gordon before he had been able to make any progress in the matter. Since then monographs of many of the societies have been written. A topographical memoranda of the printed histories, monographs, and articles concerning the churches, the ministers of which are members of the monthly meeting, is now being compiled, and will be included in next month's "Historic Notes." Possibly some layman in our midst will bid the meeting go forward in this important matter, and look to him for the cost of publishing the result of its researches.

GEORGE EYRE EVANS,
Whitchurch, Salop.

Better Now.

If you have a fragrant flower
In your heart's own garden grown
For your friend, and some glad hour
Mean to make it all her own,
Do not wait, the lilied coffin
Sees no wreath; dear heart! Learn how
Love's best blossoms may be given
Better now.

If a box of alabaster
For your darling's head you hold,
Costly, precious, and would cast her
All its sweetness manifold
Some glad day, wait not. To-morrow
By her grave, perhaps, you'll bow.
Stay not for the touch of sorrow
Break it now.

Better silence by the casket,
Funeral eulogy unsaid,
Than the living lips that ask it
Lack the word that's merited.
Death reads no obituary;
Hears no requiem; learn how
Praise to speak pre-mortuary;
Speak it now.

Better coffin plain and flowerless,
Holding one whose life was filled
Full of fragrance. Gifts are powerless
When the beating heart is stilled.
Kiss belated, love post-mortem,
Cannot smooth the furrowed brow;
Garlands throw no backward perfume,
Wreathe them now.

Frogs.

The thought sometimes crosses the mind, who is Rowley? A question suggested by the famous lyric which begins:

A frog he would a-wooing go;
Heigho, says Rowley.

We do not, of course, take exception to the frog going to woo; such a step is man-like, so it may be frog-like, for aught we know. But who is Rowley, and why does he interfere, and what does he mean by Heigho! that the frog he would a-wooing go

Whether his mother would let him or no,

denotes a somewhat saucy and disobedient spirit; but really these things so often occur in families, that it is no use being over-particular. It is rather difficult to see in what sense he went wooing

With his roly poly, gammon and spinach;

but this is the means of bringing us to a knowledge of the Christian name of the mysterious Rowley—

Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

We refrain from plunging further into the lyric, and tracing the tragic end of the frog, the cat, and the mouse; but it may be worth remarking that Rowley is ready with his Heigho at every stage of the history.

The frog is not unknown to poets in other quarters. Witness the frogs of Aristophanes; Homer's Epic of the Wars of the Frogs and Mice; the important dramatic part filled by the frog in Æsop's Fables; and Grimm's curious old legends, in which princes and nobles so often assume the outward form of the frog. In some ages and countries the frog has put on the form of superstition. He was sacred among the Egyptians, who credited him with a power of purifying the waters. We know that the toe of the frog was one of the ingredients of the witches' cauldron in Macbeth; though Shakespeare has not told us what particular efficacy it was supposed to possess. There was an old charm which consisted in cutting out the tongue of a live frog and laying it on the heart of a sleeping woman, and which compelled her to return a true answer to any question put to her; rather an awkward proof of Mr. Froggy's influence. If it be true that frogs

can foretell the weather, or enable others to do so, a superstitious regard for them becomes rather respectable than otherwise. Mr. Pengelly, the naturalist, states that a few years ago he overtook a farm labourer near Torquay, when the following colloquy ensued :—

"It's a fine evening!"

"Yes, 'tis, but there'll be rain before morning!"

"Rain before morning! Why, there's not a cloud to be seen, and we've had no rain for some weeks. What makes you think there'll be rain?"

"Well, the frogs make me think so. I've seen lots of 'em jumping across the road this evening—there goes another. I'm sure there'll be rain before morning."

And rain there was.

Many of the beliefs and disbeliefs concerning the frog, the right notions and wrong notions relating to him, are dependent on his very remarkable personal history. The creature commences life as a tadpole, without limbs, but with a fish-like tail or paddle for progression through the water, and branchiæ for aquatic respiration. Some weeks afterwards, lungs begin to develop themselves, the branchiæ disappear in a withered state, the limbs peep forth, and the tail is completely but gradually absorbed; Master Tadpole becomes Master Frog, and is immensely delighted at being able to live like other landsmen, instead of eternally paddling in the water. Nevertheless he still abides near marshes and ditches.

The so-called showers of frogs have led to much misconception. Often after a warm July shower, meadows and lanes show myriads of young frogs, leaping about in all directions; sometimes coming so suddenly and unexpectedly as to give rise to a belief that they have fallen from the clouds. The small size of such animals denotes that they have only recently emerged from the tadpole state. Under the theory of showers of frogs, some observers contend that the action of a violent wind is sufficient to elevate the spawn of frogs to a certain height in the air; and that the germ of each animal there develops itself into a true frog, and that the whole family of frogs return to the ground as rain. But there are some awkward difficulties connected with specific gravity, in relation to this. Professor Pontus, of Cahors, communicated to the French Academy, early in the present century, the particulars of a shower of frogs which he observed near Toulouse. He saw several young frogs on the cloaks of two gentlemen who had been caught in a storm on the road. When the diligence in which he was travelling arrived at the place where the shower had burst forth, the road and fields were observed to be full of frogs, in some places three or four deep; the horses' hoofs killed thousands during the passage of the vehicle along the road. It was observed that the shower was preceded by the sudden appearance of a very thick cloud from the horizon, and the bursting out of a thunderstorm. The explanation of these phenomena, now accepted as most likely to be correct, is that myriads of young frogs, just emerged from the tadpole state, and taking their first walk on dry land, are whirled up by the vortex or whirlwind which so often occurs in sultry, thundery weather, and afterwards fall as a shower by their own weight.

The Heralds' College knows something about frogs, or ought so to do, for these batrachians figure in many an old emblazonment and armorial bearing. The early kings of France, long before the republican tricolor was thought of, had three frogs in a yellow field on their banners and coat armour; through some curious whim or freak, these frogs were afterwards changed to *fleurs de lis*, or lilies. The symbolic meaning seems to be lost; but in some old English churches there are stone effigies of mailed knights, supported by frogs—or rather, a frog supports the knight's sword. A golden frog hangs from the right ear of an armed figure in a monument at Boxted Church, Suffolk; the monument, of the time of Charles the First, is commemorative of Sir John Foley. Ireland, true to her belief that St. Patrick drove away all reptiles from that favoured island, asserts that frogs were banished as well as snakes. The land certainly brings forth frogs now, and in considerable number; but an unexpected explanation of this phenomenon is given :—"However fabulous it may appear, it is certain that frogs were formerly unknown in this country (Ireland). They were first propagated here from Spain, intended as an experiment, by a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, in 1696."

Naturalists have not left us entirely without anecdotes of froggy. Dr. Roots had a frog which domesticated itself in the kitchen. Every even-

ing, when the servants went to supper, he peeped out of his hole, as if to reconnoitre, jumped out if all seemed right, basked on the warm bright hearth, and there remained till the family went to bed. A friendship sprang up between froggy and an old cat, who shared the fireside with him, and was solicitous not to disturb or incommode his strange companion. A writer in the *Zoologist* states, that on one occasion, he saw several frogs gather round a window, crawl up the sun-blind, and peep into the room, each in his turn. At the time he did not understand what it meant; but on the following morning he found a frog which had accidentally been imprisoned between the window and the blind. The episode became clear enough; the frogs had anxiously clambered up to see a comrade who was in trouble, and were no doubt sorry at being unable to extricate him.

Manchester College (Oxford) Letter.

(MAY).

First, as to a mistake which crept into the former (April) letter. The Hungarian successor of Mr Jozan is not blessed with so English a surname as Greeting. This word, like the "Peace be with you!" of the biblical epistles, was a mere valedictory ending. As our present Hungarian student is particularly patriotic—witness his last term's opening of a debate on Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism—we are endeavouring thus early to avoid hurting the susceptibilities of his successor, and would present him to your notice as a true Hungarian and no hybrid.

So far we have spent a most enjoyable term. Oxford, with the delightful weather we have been having, has looked its very best. The river, the parks, the college gardens and groves, Christ Church meadow, the country round—all is beautiful. The lower river is busy with its "eights," the upper with its yachts, pleasure boats, and canoes. On the former, agonising struggles; on the latter, a real Eastern luxury of taking things easy—the very divinity of slackness.

The parks are full of cricket and tennis.

All our men go in for some exercise or other. A tennis court has been taken and proves attractive. Cricket, tennis, and boating of the upper-river order have also their votaries.

But there is a darker side to the picture. Examinations are looming before us. But *en assez*—the thought even suffices!

The Fabian Society is flourishing. Mr. Hugh Holmes Gore of Bristol has lectured for it this term on the "Democratic Spirit," and had a good hearing. It hopes to see Mr. Edward Carpenter down, when, in conformity with his ideas, it offers him, in truly peripatetic fashion, a pleasant garden, and not a stuffy room to speak in.

An excellent debate took place at the Union on the 15th. The motion was to the effect "that the aims set forth in *Merrie England* were 'the baseless fabric of a vision.'" By far the best speech of the evening was by Mr. Belloc, an ex-president. He is one of the best speakers the Union has had for some time, of remarkable fluency, and full of verve. He is always in earnest—a somewhat rare thing at the Union, where the prevailing spirit is one of mere smartness. Except where "seriousness of manner" is allied to great strength of character and power over the "house," the latter is apt to regard it as "the mask of a fool." The motion was carried by 106 to 54—a result surpassing Socialist expectation.

The "Social Ethics" has had Geoffrey Drage down to lecture to it.

The "Russell"—a Radical Club, founded in 1880—has some good papers in prospect. On May 30, Archdeacon Wilson is giving one on "Old and new elements in the Labour Problem, and ethical contributions to its solution." On June 5th, Professor York Powell one entitled "A Poet's Politics."

Professor Carpenter's programme for his Sunday "at Homes" this term is an excellent one.—Professor Toy of Harvard lectured to us on "Protestantism in France."—Mr. Carpenter read us Mr. Jack's paper on "Kidd's Social Evolution," which was followed by a good discussion.—Mr. Graham Wallas, M.A., is lecturing on "Can virtue be taught?"—Mr. J. H. Muirhead, M.A., on "Aspects of the Social Problem," and Rev. Hastings Rashdall, M.A., on Self-sacrifice and its limits."

Our "Poz" has just come out, and is again an excellent number. For the first time there appears on its title-page its "original principle," which runs thus:—"This magagine adheres to its original principle of freely imparting all manner of information without regard to the truth or propriety of particular statements." There is a frontispiece, à la Aubrey Beardsly, and several other amusing "pen and inks" by our "special artist." The articles are all anonymous, and the artist's name remains a secret. The general public will have the pleasure of seeing the sketches, articles, and verse some twenty years hence, when they will probably have quite an antiquarian interest.

We have had, so far, one debate and one Shakespeare meeting this term. Mr. Fallows opened a debate on "The Gothenburg System." Mr. Anderton opposed. At the Shakespeare Mr. Connell read a paper on "The Sonnets." The rest of the evening was given up to "la bagatelle." We have had good congregations at chapel this term. The singing, according to general report, has greatly improved. We are fortunate in an organist. We had a very excellent sermon on the 11th from Mr. Halsey, a Congregationalist minister. The controversy as to the windows in the chapel, which has excited so much discussion elsewhere, has left us untouched.

The first lesson a young man has to learn, whether in reading books, or looking at pictures, or studying human character, is not to find fault, but to perceive beauties.

Star Dust!

To the poet every common bush is a-flame with God; the rest of us sit round and eat blackberries.

No opinion can really be called our own unless it is the captive of our own bow and spear—the result of our own thought and effort.

Men look at a threepenny bit before accepting it or passing it on to their neighbour; but they never dream of doing as much by their opinions; these they accept and pass on without examination, false or not false, as may happen.

Nothing is more astonishing than the sort of frivolity, not to say profligacy, that exists in the region of intellectual morality. With the majority of people the most trifling detail of housekeeping, or of dress, receives more serious attention than the principles on which the Conduct of Life is founded.

Intellectual responsibility is a very great part of moral responsibility.

A Gospel that sadly needs to be preached is that of our duty towards our own minds.

It is said that, as there are many subjects, Chemistry, Biology, Hydrostatics, Astronomy, etc., etc, in regard to which we have not the time or scholarship to form an independent judgment, but must accept certain statements on the authority of the specialists, so we need not be surprised that the Church should ask us to accept the creeds on her special authority. No doubt it would be extremely unkind for most of us to question the validity of received astronomical calculations, since we do not possess such technical knowledge as this criticism would require. But the answer is that the Conduct of Life is of vital interest to everybody, whereas only a few find it necessary to acquire astronomical knowledge. If all men were navigators, all would have to learn for themselves the theories of the stars, and how to make astronomical calculations. We are all navigators on the sea of life, and some theory of navigation we are bound to study. Religion is the one sphere in which we cannot accept the conclusions of others, because religion is every man's dominant concern. Millions of men can dispense with any theory of chemistry or astronomy; no man can dispense with a theory of Life, Conduct, and Destiny. Hence in that region every man must think and explore for himself.

No endowments are so universal as those of the Moralist and the Theologian. They are endowments which mankind exercises every day and every hour.

Every man who thinks at all Theologises, that is, frames some theory of how life should be lived, of its relation to the universe and to the future.

All honour to our ancestors for their efforts to arrive at truth. All shame to us if we are simply content with their conclusions. Their goal is our starting point.

It is said, how can such little men as we hope to be wiser than such giants of thought as Augustine, Luther, Baxter, Hooker, Newman, and Pusey. Well, it may well be that we are but pigmies compared with these giants, and yet *the pigmy on the giant's shoulder sees farther than the giant.*

"I love religion, but hate theology," is quite a common sentiment of our day. A man might as well say, "I love flowers, but hate botany." As botany is to flowers, so is theology to religion—the theory which explains its working and reveals its order.

Underlying all the goodness that passes by the name of religion, everywhere and always there is theology; for theology is just that theory of life, and goodness, and conduct, which we cherish and practice. As such it is the queen of sciences—

> Not hard and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute.

Many a man feels gratitude, and yet finds the greatest difficulty in expressing it. Let him pray as a dumb man for the gift of speech, for gratitude unexpressed is apt to die out and leave the heart cold and morose.

To thank a man is to make him feel that he is of some use in the world, and this is one of the finest impulses towards a better life.

No man ever committed suicide who felt himself to be of some use in the world.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The Water Rat.

Children are very hard to grow,
And take a deal of talking to;
We have to teach them all they know,
And tell them all they say and do.
Nephews are noisy and take tips,
And nieces are extremely pert,
And if they're small they pout their lips,
And roar at us before they're hurt.

I took a walk upon the green,
I led a nephew by the hand,
A little niece, demure and clean,
Ran forward o'er the sunny land.
How could I tell there was a pond
Beneath her when she climbed the wall?
And when I thought she'd passed beyond
My bawling, why, I ceased to bawl.

We sauntered home, she was not there;
We search'd the house, the grounds, in vain;
We search'd the green in our despair,
And then we search'd the house again.
At last I thought about the wall,
And then I saw a sight of awe:
A little pond where she might fall!
And so I screamed at what I saw.

We tried to drag and sound it, oh!
Its bottom was our reach beyond;
It was too deep for us to go—
I think it was a fairy pond!
And so we bought us clothes of black,
And softly spoke beneath our breath;
While still I carried on my back
The burden of my niece's death.

One day beside the pond I sat,
And look'd with sorrow on the place;
When such a dainty water rat
Jump'd up and stared me in the face.
Oh, water rats are always nice,
I've liked them from my boyish days;
They're better than domestic mice;
They are so friendly in their ways.

Quite loving was this rat, at least
She sat and stared into my eyes;
A friendship grew 'twixt man and beast,
So deep, it did myself surprise.
The creature climbed upon my knee,
Ate bread and butter from my hand,
And, strange to say, appeared to me
Each word I said to understand.

A collar round her neck, I tied,
Clasp'd with the semblance of a pearl;
She shook her head with pretty pride,
Just like a saucy little girl.
She fixed me with her human eyes
(I did not like their look by half),
And then, to my intense surprise,
This water rat began to laugh!

I fancy I was frighten'd then,
Perhaps a little scream I gave
('Tis not a common trick with men,
But somehow I was not born brave).
I flung the creature from my knee;
I think that I began to run;
My nephews laughed the sight to see,
Seeming to find it awful fun.

'Tis dinner-time; we sought the house,
Our places round the table took;
My sister said, "Is that a mouse?"
I saw her start and turn'd to look.
Where, close beside me on a chair,
Just like a little lady, sat,
Nibbling her bread with comic air,
My quondam friend—the water rat!

I bit my lips and did not scream,
I wonder'd what it meant, I did;
It was more queer than any dream—
I thought it ought to be forbid.
The rat upon the table stept
(I felt a little odd and pale),
And softly to my sister crept,
And slyly pointed with her tail—

At me! Oh, then I scream'd aloud—
I rose—I turn'd—I tried to flee—
(To scream, I never was too proud,
And let me ask, why should I be?)
I cried, they ought to kill the rat,
It was not orthodox or nice,
Or give it to the pussy cat,
Or somehow follow my advice.

"Kill it yourself," my sister said,
A touch of anger in her tone;
The little creature hung her head,
And gave a little mournful moan.
My sister stroked her velvet ears,
And said, "We will not kill you yet;
Be a brave rat, subdue your fears,
I'll keep you for a household pet."

I ask'd her husband, was it he
Who would allow a taste so low?
He shrugg'd his shoulders carelessly,
And said, "*Caprice de femme*, you know."
(But since her little daughter died
He does indulge her every whim;
I've noticed, if she only sighed,
It seemed to be a stab to him).

When bed-time came, each sought his room,
The rat beside us shyly crept;
We pass'd a chamber full of gloom—
'Twas where our little May had slept;
My sister turned away her head;
The rat darts thro' the door like light,
Jumps with excitement on the bed,
And 'neath the sheets is lost to sight.

Next morning, in the bed we found
A very darling little girl;
A collar lay her neck around,
Clasp'd with the semblance of a pearl.
She was alive—she laugh'd and kiss'd,
A hundred saucy things did say,
Asking us if she had been miss'd,
Or if we'd found another May?

Of course a fairy pond was that,
And she was saved by fairy force,
And changed into a water rat;
All these are matters quite of course.
Of course her happy mother wept;
Her father felt as if he dream'd;
Her brothers ran about and leapt;
And as for me, of course, I scream'd.

Two Parables.

II.

General Information.

Have you ever found a house, a room, a cupboard, or a drawer in the last stage of confusion, and have remarked how *full* each seemed? It was difficult to move in the house or room for the crowd; everything seemed twice its natural size; everything had twice the ordinary number of corners, and the corners were each twice as sharp as usual. The cupboard or the drawer would hardly shut, and you could find nothing, or found it so crushed as to be spoilt. Perhaps you set to work to bring order into this confusion. You arranged the things conveniently with reference to their uses. You put the large and heavy ones below the light and small ones, those that would be constantly needed in more attainable places than those you would seldom use, and when it was finished, you were struck by nothing so much as by the gain in space. It seems the house, the room, the cupboard, and the drawer were not really full at all. They would each hold as much again with ease.

Herein is a parable.

Some lively, active people are fond of talking of the advantages of what they call "general information," which, so far as I understand them, consists of a heterogeneous heap of the scraps and leavings of ideas, perfectly valueless and isolated in themselves, but which, it is supposed, will one day be useful, and of which you cannot have too much, seeing that in the quantity and not the quality lies their value.

These people advise the cultivation of an incessant inquisitiveness and peeringness. The smallest details are snatched at, the widest bearings overlooked, and the collector of these microscopic nothings, if he has any real love of knowledge, soon feels a weariness not to be named, and a sense of bursting repletion in his poor, confused brain.

I hope at this sad juncture he will find himself near a wise friend or book, who will tell him he is not suffering from repletion, but from confusion, and will advise him to do as did the man who set in order the seemingly crowded house, or room, or cupboard, or drawer. He must sort his ideas, and in so doing, I am sure he will find a vast deal of rubbish and dirt that must be got rid of.

He must group the various ideas, according to their subjects and relations to each other. He must put the weighty ones below, first, because they form the fitting groundwork and foundation for the others, and then because they are apt to be of a nature that is injured by the light of common talk and day, and shine only in a soft half-light of heart to heart speech and silent deeds. The gauzy, winged ideas, the "topmost froth of thought," must be delicately handled and never pressed. They keep best on the surface, though it is strange with what deep, grave chords they synchronise, and how often they set these ringing. When all this is done, I think the poor collector of "general information" will find he has plenty of space, and in future he will judge of the value of each new fact or idea before be admits it, remembering the wise man who said: "There is a great secret in knowing what to keep out of the mind, as well as what to put in."

When the idea is admitted it will be ranged instantly in the place where its use is best served, its beauty best displayed, and its specific gravity most naturally carries it.

"After all, my dear friend," wrote Voltaire to Cidwille, "it is right to give every possible form to our soul. It is a flame with which God has entrusted us; we are bound to feed it with all that we find most precious. We should introduce into our existence all imaginable modes, and open every door of the soul to all sorts of knowledge and all sorts of feelings; so long as it does not all go in pell-mell, there is plenty of room for everything."

H. G. B.

News from the Field.

REV. J. HARRISON.—The *Midland Advertiser* of May 4th has the following appreciative notice of Mr. Harrison, who is leaving West Bromwich to act under the Midland Christian Union as Missionary Agent :—"Many of my readers will learn with regret that the Rev. John Harrison is resigning his position as minister to Lodge Road Chapel to accept missionary charge of Small Heath and Wolverhampton Unitarian Churches. Mr. Harrison has been identified with the public life of West Bromwich for more than twenty years, and by his quiet earnestness of purpose, wide range of reading, and large-minded toleration of clashing thought, has won for himself a wide circle of friends and admirers outside the adherents of his own particular theological school. In the days when the Liberalism of West Bromwich was a united and aggressive force, Mr. Harrison was a popular platform speaker and an ardent fighter in most of the local and all the Parliamentary battles fought. Of late years, however, although he has remained loyal to his belief in the principles of Liberalism, Mr. Harrison has, for various reasons, relinqnished active participation in political strife. As a member of the School Board he won golden opinions from the whole of his colleagues for his persistent zeal in promoting the educational interests of the town, and his non-return at the recent election, caused in a large measure by the over-confidence of his friends, was greatly deplored on every hand. Though Mr. Harrison resumes his new duties shortly, he will, I understand, at least for some time continue to reside in West Bromwich."

BANBURY.—On Sunday evening, May 12th, at the close of service, the congregation adjourned to the Schoolroom and held the annual business meeting. The chair was occupied by the Minister (Rev. H. Hill). In opening the proceedings he briefly referred to the events of the year in which Chapel and Sunday School had been interested and taken part. The Treasurer (Mr. Briscoe) then submitted his accounts for the past twelve months, showing a slight balance on the right side. These were duly adopted. Mr. Briscoe was then re-elected to the post of treasurer ; Mr. James Miles was re-appointed minute secretary ; Messrs. R. and J. Miles were again elected as chapel wardens ; Messrs. Mann, Davis, Galsworthy, and Coleman were then appointed as members of the committee. Several resolutions of importance were then submitted to the meeting and unanimously passed, — thanks to the Treasurer and Officers, &c. A cheerful and hopeful meeting was then brought to a close.

BIRMINGHAM.—(*Newhall Hill Church Sunday School Anniversary.*)—The sixty-first anniversary was held on Sunday, May 12th, when sermons were preached by the Rev. E. Ceredig Jones, of Bradford. The scholars sang special hymns, and the church was decorated with plants and flowers. The collections, including special donations, amounted to the handsome sum of £23 1s. 7d. The tea party was held on Monday evening, and a large number of friends were present. Mr. John Stych was in the chair, and there were also present the Rev. E. Ceredig Jones, Rev. E. Lummis, Rev. A. A. Charlesworth, and others. The report of the schools was read by one of the superintendents (Mr. S. T. Cross), which stated that there were 222 boys in the school, with an average attendance of 82 per cent., and the number in the girls' school was 97, with an average attendance of 63 per cent. Prizes were awarded to twenty-nine girls for punctuality and good conduct, including twelve special prizes for perfectly regular attendance ; and seventy-four prizes, including also twenty-one special prizes, were awarded in the boys' school. For many years past the schools have been noted for their generous aid to the Children's Hospital, and since the last anniversary have contributed £44 to the funds, while during the last eleven years they have contributed no less than £254. The exceptional severity of the past winter caused the school to make a collection in aid of the distress fund, and five guineas were subscribed by the teachers and pupils. There is a Guild of Good Work, formed for the elder pupils and junior members of the congregation, which has been very successful. The Ladies' Benevolent Society have, through its indefatigable hon. secretary (Mrs. J. S. Jennens), rendered valuable aid to those in need in the schools. There is an excellent library of over 3,000 volumes of good books, which the teachers do all they can to encourage the pupils to read. Upwards of £160 has been paid into the savings club during the year, and generally an excellent record of work was given in the report. The choir rendered some charming pieces during the evening, and a very successful meeting was brought to a close. On Tuesday evening, May 14th, a public service was held in the church, and conducted by the Rev. L. De Beaumont Klein. D.Sc., of London.

EVESHAM.—A Tablet has been placed in the Oat Street Chapel in memory of the late Mr. Herbert New.

HOLLYWOOD.—Kingswood Chapel looked its brightest on the 19th May, when the usual flower services were held. The decorators had worked well together with excellent effect, the result of their labours being pretty, tasteful, and harmonious. The Rev. J. A. Matthews preached in the morning on "Growing up," and the evening subject was "The Great Builder." There were good congregations. The annual meeting was held after morning service, when the treasurer's accounts were presented and passed, and officers for the ensuing year elected. There have been several entertainments of late in the schoolroom to procure funds for the purchase of a new harmonium. The last was arranged by Mr. H. W. Johnson, when the room was crowded. The sale of tickets realized £5 5s.

Too many of us are nothing but
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply thought nor clearly will'd ;
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd.